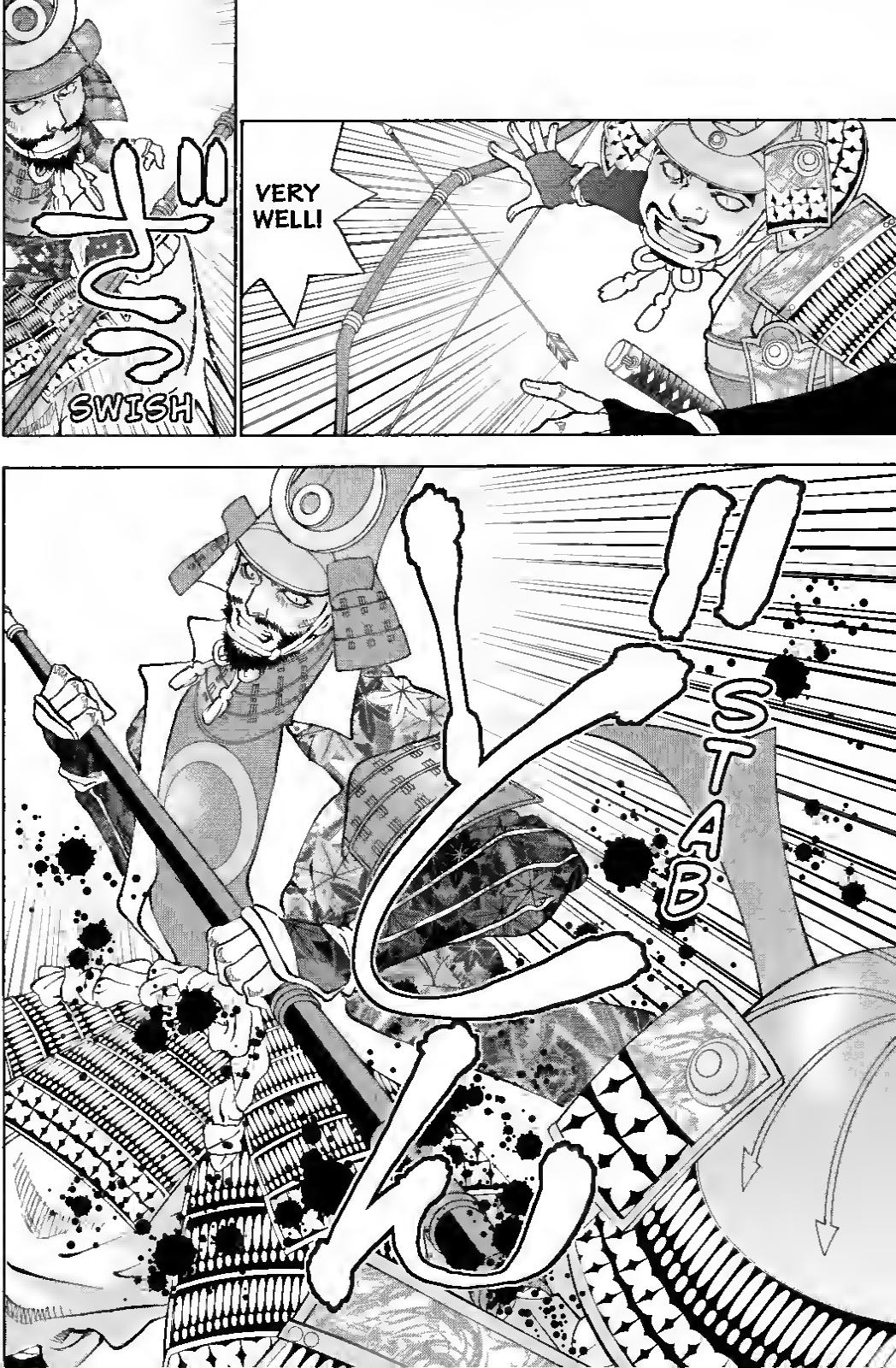
THE LEGEND OF ONIKIRIMARU

CHAPTER 13: THE DEMON GENERAL DESTROYS THE KAPPA

KEI KUSUNOKI

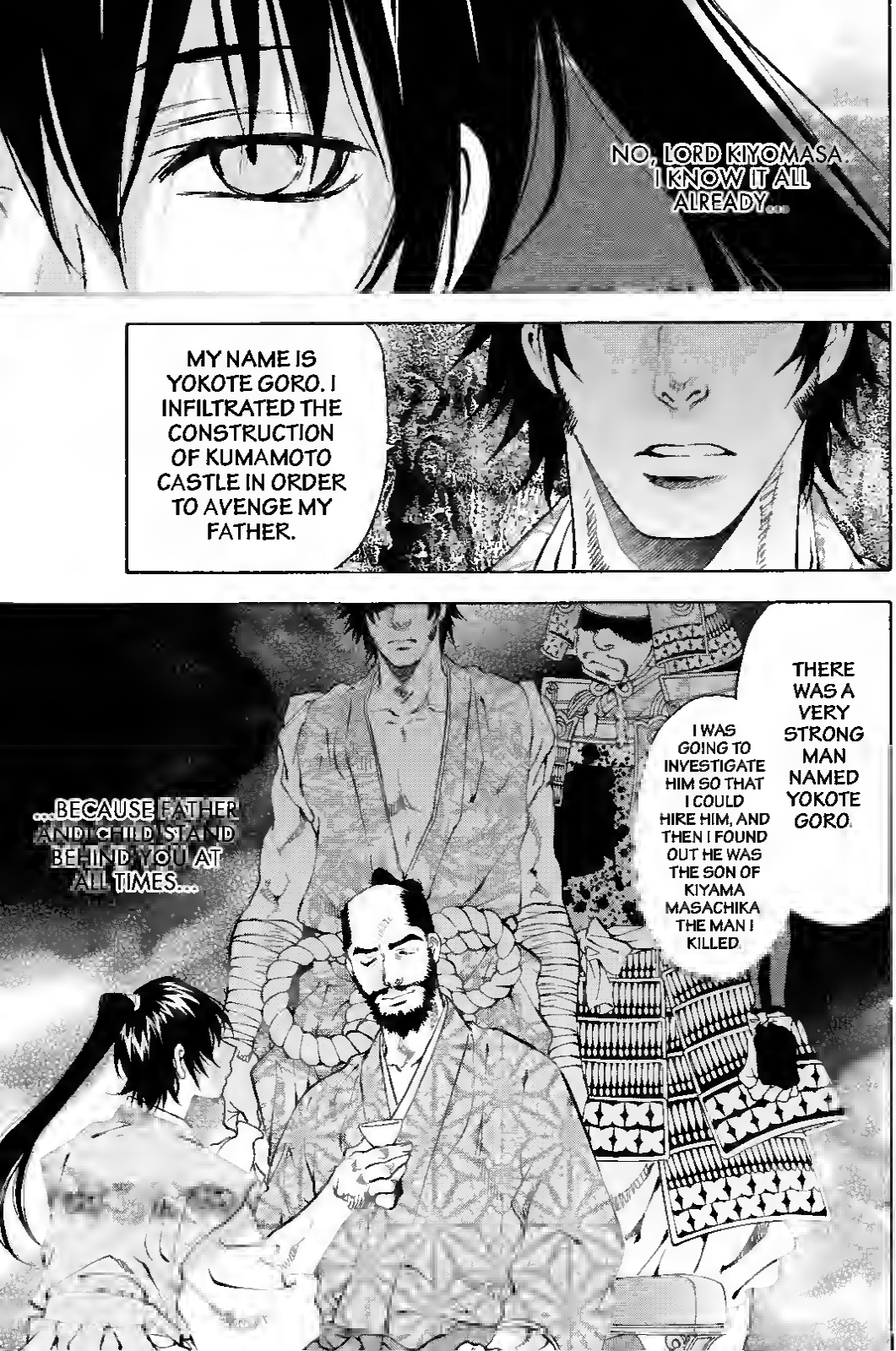
KATO KIYOMASA.
TOYOTOMI HIDEYOSHI'S PERSONAL RETAINER. ONE OF THE SEVEN SPEARS OF SHIZUGATAKE.
THE FIRST RULER OF HIGO, KUMAMOTO PROVINCE, KNOWN FOR HIS EXCELLENT ADMINISTRATIVE ABILITIES. HE WAS A SKILLED WARRIOR AND A SKILLED TACTICIAN.
BUT WERE ANY OF THE WARRING STATES GENERALS TRULY NOT CRUEL?

1588.
WHEN KIYOMASA ASSUMED HIS RULE IN HIGO, A REBELLION BROKE OUT IN AMAKUSA. HE ENGAGED IN A DUEL WITH A LOCAL NAMED KIYAMA MASACHIKA.
PREPARE TO DIE, KATOU KIYO-MASA!
THIS IS A DUEL! ENGAGE ME WITH YOUR BLADE, FAIR AND SQUARE!
©CLAMP
I SHALL THROW DOWN MY SPEAR!


SWISH
VERY WELL!
STAB

COWARDLY, OR WISE...
YOU COWARD!
A WARLORD MUST BE VICTORIOUS!
THE NEXT YEAR, CONSTRUCTION BEGAN ON KUMAMOTO CASTLE.
KIYOMASA JOINED WITH THE EASTERN ARMIES AT SEKIGAHARA, BUT HIS LOYALTY TO THE HIDEYOSHI CLAN WAS UNWAVERING.
KUMAMOTO CASTLE WAS BUILT SO THAT HIDEYOSHI'S SON, HIDEYORI, COULD BE KEPT THERE IN TIME OF NEED.

1606: KUMAMOTO CASTLE IS COMPLETE
OH, COME CLOSE, YATOU-MARU!
TONIGHT I'LL TELL YOU THE STORY OF THE SON OF KIYAMA MASACHIKA, WHO I SLEW WHEN I BUILT THIS CASTLE.
NHOOP
I WOULD LOVE TO HEAR IT, LORD KIYOMASA.
SHUDO
HOMOSEXUALITY IN SAMURAI SOCIETY WAS NOT ONLY A MEANS OF ESTABLISHING DOMINANCE BETWEEN LORD AND SERVANT, BUT ALSO OF ENHANCING LOYALTY AND SECURING PROMOTION.
PAGE YATOUMARU


NO, LORD KIYOMASA. I KNOW IT ALL ALREADY...
MY NAME IS YOKOTE GORO. I INFILTRATED THE CONSTRUCTION OF KUMAMOTO CASTLE IN ORDER TO AVENGE MY FATHER.
THERE WAS A VERY STRONG MAN NAMED YOKOTE GORO.
I WAS GOING TO INVESTIGATE HIM SO THAT I COULD HIRE HIM, AND THEN I FOUND OUT HE WAS THE SON OF KIYAMA MASACHIKA THE MAN I KILLED.
...BECAUSE FATHER AND CHILD STAND BEHIND YOU AT ALL TIMES...

CURSE YOU! CURSE YOU!
GRIND
GRIND
GRIND
I MADE HIM DIG A WELL, AND THEN DROPPED ROCKS DOWN ON TOP OF HIM.
BUT HE WAS AS STRONG AS HIS FATHER, AND CAUGHT THEM ALL.

BRING SAND!
I FILLED THE WELL WITH SAND AND BURIED HIM ALIVE.
AAAHH!
ZSSSH

YOU DECEIVED BOTH FATHER AND CHILD!
CURSE YOU, CURSE YOU!
LORD KIYO-MASA!
IF THEY HAD ONLY SERVED ME, I WOULD'VE KEPT THEM ALIVE...
THEIR GREAT STRENGTH WENT TO WASTE.

PLEASE BE CAREFUL.
YOUR ENEMIES ARE NOT SIMPLY LIVING HUMANS.
WORRY NOT. I AM STRONG.
GRIN
BE IT A MONSTER OR A DEMON I WILL STRIKE IT DOWN!
SHIVER

OH NO... IF I DON'T DO SOMETHING...
JUST MAKE SURE YOU DON'T APPROACH THE WATER. MONSTERS LURK IN THE WATER, READY TO DRAG YOU UNDER...
THE RAGING SPIRITS OF THE KIYAMAS SHALL BECOME DEMONS...
OR PERHAPS THE MERCILESS LORD KIYOMASA SHALL BECOME ONE...

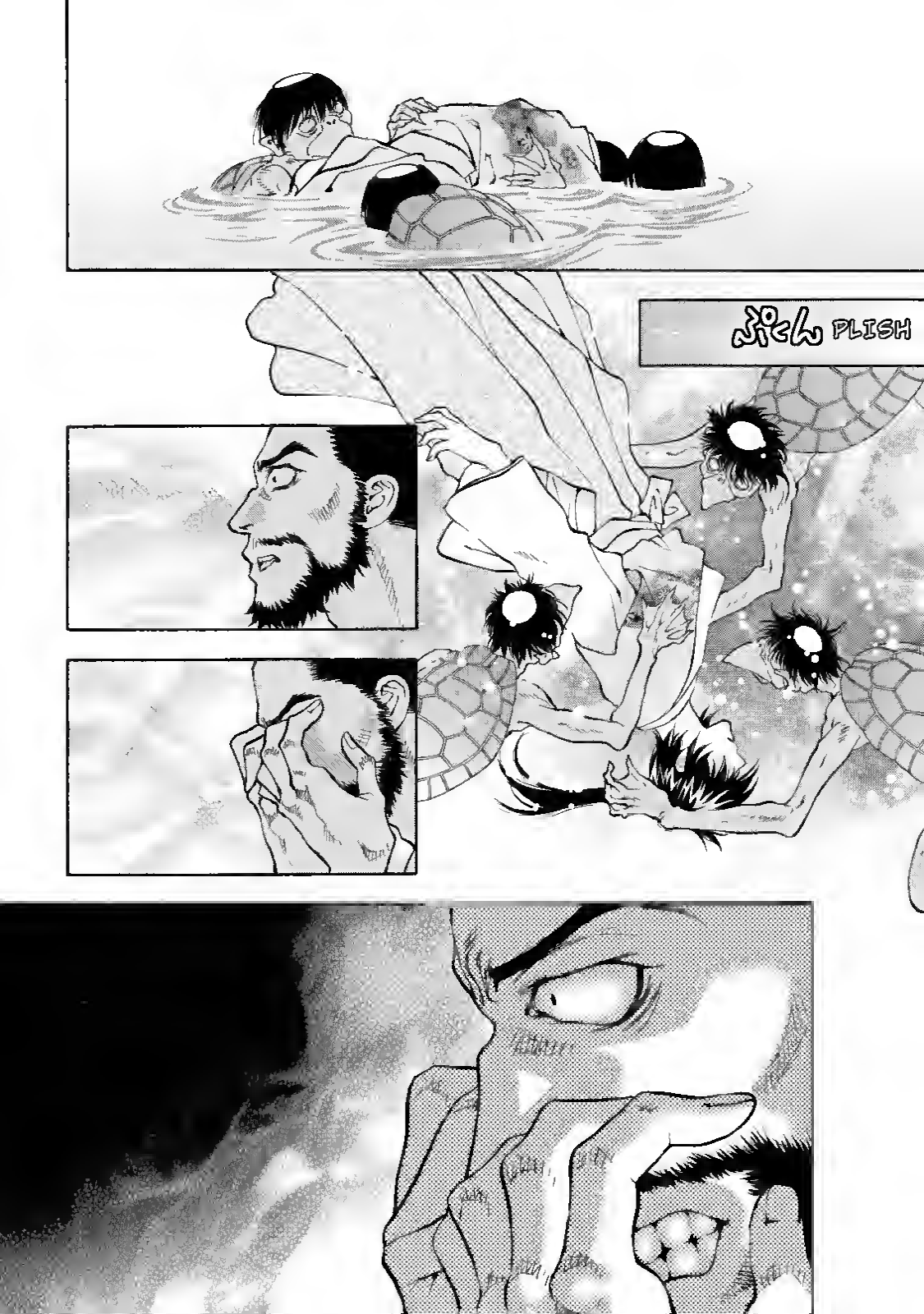
IN THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN DWELL HUMANS, MONSTERS, GHOSTS, AND GODS, ALL LIVING TOGETHER...
BUT THE DEMONS EXIST ONLY TO KILL.
WHICH WILL HAPPEN FIRST?
WHAT IS THE FATE OF THOSE WHO BECOME DEMONS?

THE ONLY FATE OF A DEMON IS DEATH.
GASP
はっ
ONIKIRIMARU... THE NAME OF THE ONLY BLADE WHICH CAN CUT THROUGH THE FLESH OF DEMONS.
WHAT WAS THAT?

NO... I DON'T WANT LORD KIYOMASA TO BECOME A DEMON.
I'M SURE IF HE WERE EATEN BY A DEMON HE WOULD BE ABLE TO GO TO PARADISE.
はっ
GASP
ふっふっふ
HEH...

WHERE IS YATOU-MARU?
WE SEARCHED THE CASTLE AND FOUND NO SIGN OF HIM.
BUT THERE IS A BODY FLOATING IN THE KUMA RIVER...
WHAT...?

YATOU-MARU!
LORD KIYOMASA, WAIT! THERE ARE KAPPA IN THE WATER!


PLISH

BRING FORTH THE WHOLE ARMY TO SLAY THE KAPPA!
POISON THE RIVER WATER AND THROW IN BURNING HOT COALS!
KILL EVERY KAPPA IN THE RIVER!

ROOOOOAR
WILL YOU DO NOTHING, ACCURSED CHILD OF A DEMON?
I KILL DEMONS, THAT IS ALL. AREN'T *YOU* GOING TO HELP THEM?

HE IS AS STRONG AS A DEMON.
BUT THERE IS NO NEED FOR MY HELP.
SHIGERU IS ONLY HERE TODAY BECAUSE OF KIYO-MASA.
I OWE KATOU KIYOMASA A DEBT. HE DID NOT KILL GINCHIYO AND SHIGERU.

SOMEONE ASK PRIEST KANSETSU TO MEDIATE!
KYUSENBO – THE GREATEST KAPPA KING IN SHIKOKU
WE WILL BEG FOR MERCY... WE CANNOT DEFEAT KATOU KIYOMASA!
KYUSENBO, WHO COMMANDED AN ARMY OF 9000 KAPPA, SURRENDERED TO KIYOMASA VIA AN INTERMEDIARY...
...AND WAS BANISHED FROM THE KUMA RIVER.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE KAPPA BY KATO KIYOMASA, THE DEMON GENERAL OF HIGO KUMAMOTO, WAS RETALIATION FOR THE DEATH OF HIS BELOVED PAGE.
KUMAMOTO CASTLE
OH, YATOUMARU...
BUT EVEN IF I AVENGE YOU, YOU WILL NOT RETURN...
HOW SAD...

EVEN IF YOU DON'T COME BACK AS A HUMAN...
...I WANT YOU TO COME BACK.
THAT WISH IS FAR TOO DANGEROUS.
WHO ARE YOU? MY NEW PAGE?

BEGONE. YOU ARE NO MATCH FOR THE BEAUTIFUL YATOUMARU.
OH... HOW I LONG FOR EVEN A GLIMPSE OF YATOUMARU!
IT IS SAID THAT WHEN WOMEN LOSE THE MEN THEY LOVE, THEY WEEP AND GO MAD.
HOW MUCH BETTER IT WOULD BE IF I COULD DO THAT AS WELL...
WHEN A WOMAN WEEPS AND GO MAD, SHE BECOMES A DEMON.

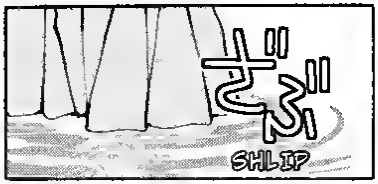
ONLY A WARLORD CAN FIGHT WITHOUT GOING MAD.
YOU ARE STRONG. STRONG ENOUGH FOR YOUR SORROW TO TURN ANOTHER INTO A DEMON.
PLIP
WHAT?
YOUR WISH IS NOW A CURSE.
THE CURSE IS SO TERRIBLE THAT IT CAN USE THE SLAIN MONSTERS AS A SACRIFICE TO SUMMON THE DEAD.

LORD KIYOMASA...
NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU LOVE THEM, ONCE THEY BECOME A DEMON, THAT IS THE END.
LORD KIYO-MASA...
LORD KIYO-MASA...
THEY ARE A MONSTER.
LORD KIYO-MASA...

SLASH
I AM SO HAPPY TO SEE YOU AGAIN.

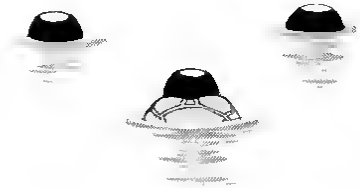
YATOU-MARU!
EVEN AS A DEMON, YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL!
WAIT! CAN YOU NOT SENSE HIS MURDEROUS INTENT?
MURDER-OUS INTENT?
I WAS WORRIED WHETHER YOU OR THE KIYAMAS...
...WOULD BECOME DEMONS FIRST...
I DIDN'T WANT YOU TO BECOME A DEMON. I THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR YOU TO DIE AS A HUMAN, DEVOURED BY THEM.

BUT THAT DAY...
I SAW THEM GIVE UP ON THEIR REVENGE AND GO TO HEAVEN.
THAT YOU WOULD BECOME A DEMON!
AND THEN I REALIZED...



I'VE HEARD THAT A CRUEL DEATH CAUSES MEN TO BECOME DEMONS.

IF YOU WERE GOING TO BECOME A DEMON, IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR ME TO BECOME ONE AND KILL YOU MYSELF.



SO YOU ENTERED THE RIVER YOURSELF?! TO BECOME A DEMON AND DEVOUR ME?
LORD KIYO-MASA...

NOW PLEASE, GRANT MY WISH!
IT WAS YOUR VOICE THAT BROUGHT ME BACK HERE AS A DEMON.

CLANG
YOU WOULD DARE TO INTER-FERE?! CURSE YOU!
YATOUMARU, WHY?! WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO DEVOUR ME?
PLEASE, LET ME DEVOUR YOU SO THAT YOU CAN END YOUR LIFE AS A HUMAN.
BECAUSE AFTER YOUR DEATH, I WANT YOU TO GO TO PARADISE.

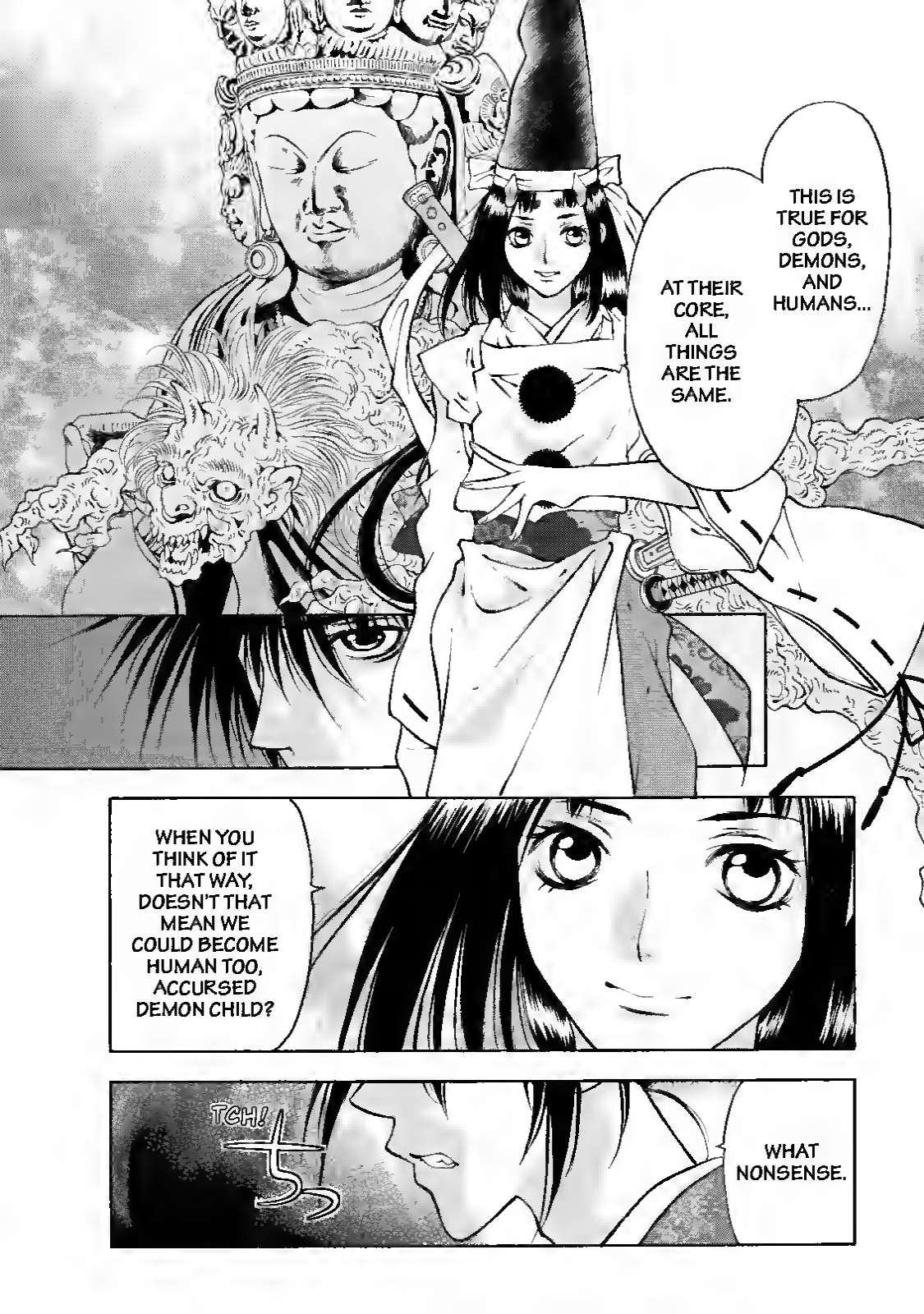
NO MATTER WHAT, I TOLD YOU THAT ALL DEMONS SHALL BE SLAIN BY ONIKIRIMARU!
THOOM
OR PERHAPS HIS LORD'S LOVE TURNED HIM INTO ONE...
HIS LOVE CAUSED HIM TO BECOME A DEMON?

YATOU-MARU!
THAT'S ENOUGH!
CLANG
THIS IS THE END!
SHING
SUZUKA GOZEN?

I OWE HIM A DEBT. AT LEAST LET HIM SAY A FINAL GOODBYE.
YES... THIS FACE.
YATOU-MARU...

THIS IS THE FACE I WANTED TO SEE.
IT IS THE FACE OF A MAN BROKEN BY SADNESS...
PLEASE... STAY HUMAN.
I SHALL COME TO YOU.
YATOU-MARU?!
WHEN YOUR LIFE COMES TO ITS NATURAL END, I SHALL...
YATOU-MARU...

I FEEL I UNDER-STAND HUMANS EVEN LESS NOW.
NOT HATE, BUT LOVE, IS WHAT MAKES A MAN BECOME A DEMON? OR MAKES A MAN TURN ANOTHER MAN INTO ONE?
LOVE AND HATRED ARE VERY SIMILAR THINGS.
YATOU-MARU!
1611. HIDEYOSHI'S SON, HIDEYORI, AND TOKUGAWA IEYASU MEET AT NIJOU CASTLE, WITH KIYOMASA'S HELP. ON THAT DAY HE COLLAPSES...
AND STRANGELY ENOUGH, ON JUNE 24TH, THE SAME DAY AS HIS BIRTH, HE DIES AT KUMAMOTO CASTLE.


THIS IS TRUE FOR GODS, DEMONS, AND HUMANS...
AT THEIR CORE, ALL THINGS ARE THE SAME.
WHEN YOU THINK OF IT THAT WAY, DOESN'T THAT MEAN WE COULD BECOME HUMAN TOO, ACCURSED DEMON CHILD?
TCH!
WHAT NONSENSE.